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TOWARD A MORE RELEVANT PUBLIC ART "The Community Mural Movement"

Esther Charbit

La croissante population multi-ethnique et économiquement défavorisée de nos villes nord-Américaines ainsi que notre environnement urbain qui se détériore rapidement ont créé un besoin immense d'un "art populaire et public."

Je suis d'avis que les principes esthétiques et la décoration, ne sont pas les préoccupations premières de l'artiste public. L'essence même de l'art public, exige qu'il ne soit pas conçu dans l'isolement du contexte social pour lequel il est créé.

Visualize two outdoor wall paintings. The first in Montreal, commissioned by a private art museum and executed by one professional artist. The painting is on two walls with a busy city street dividing them. The neighborhood is run down and consists of low income residences and small businesses. Both walls of the painting face onto a school playground. The subject of the mural: undulating and interconnecting sausage shapes in muted complementary colors. Title: "The Sex Machine".

The other mural is in Chicago, commissioned by four community groups and five churches; executed by four professional artists with the help of local residents. The painting is on the side of a middle size apartment building. The neighborhood is low income, residential, multi-racial, (Anglo and White), with many small children playing in the streets. The subject of the mural was agreed upon by a neighborhood representative committee. The painting depicts a block party showing people of the area fixing up their neighborhood. The title is "People of Lake View Unite - La Gente Del Barrio Unidos".

It is my intent in the above comparison to show the underlying social implications involved in the two different kinds of public art described.

The Montreal mural is a well executed, aesthetically pleasing painting decorating two walls. It exists separate and apart from its environment. The Chicago mural is a meaningful addition to its environment because of the direct participation of

the local residents in its conception and execution.

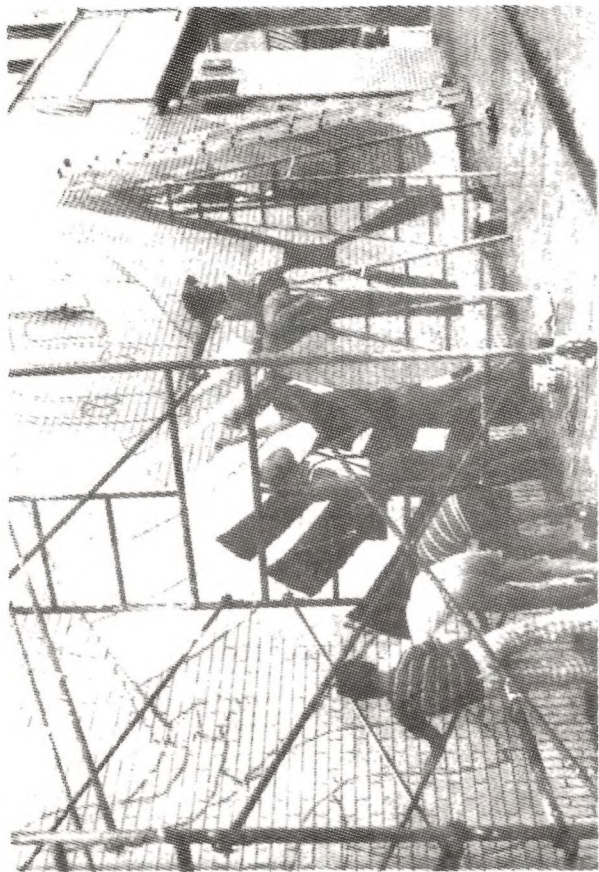
I feel that aesthetic principles and decoration are not the prime concern of the public artist. The very nature of public art demands that it not be conceived isolated from the social setting for which it is created.

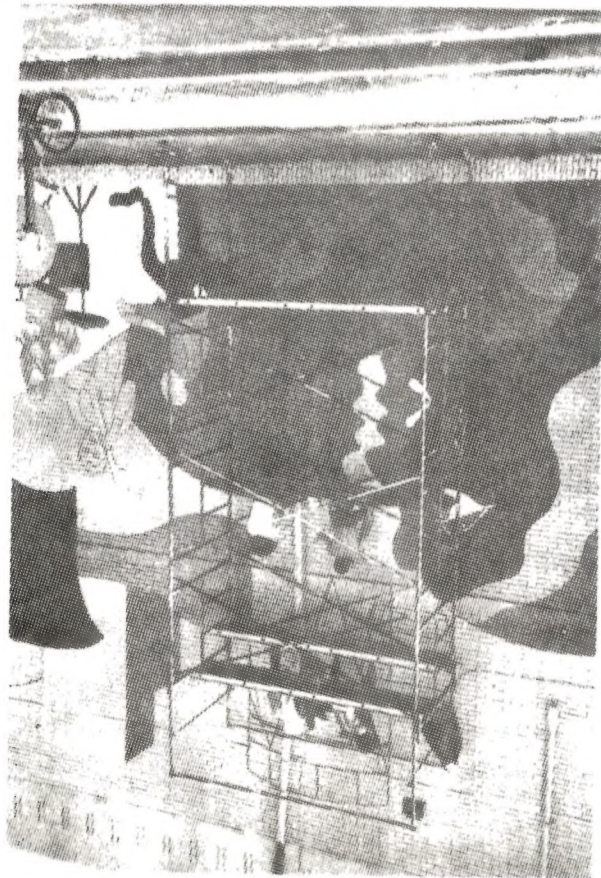
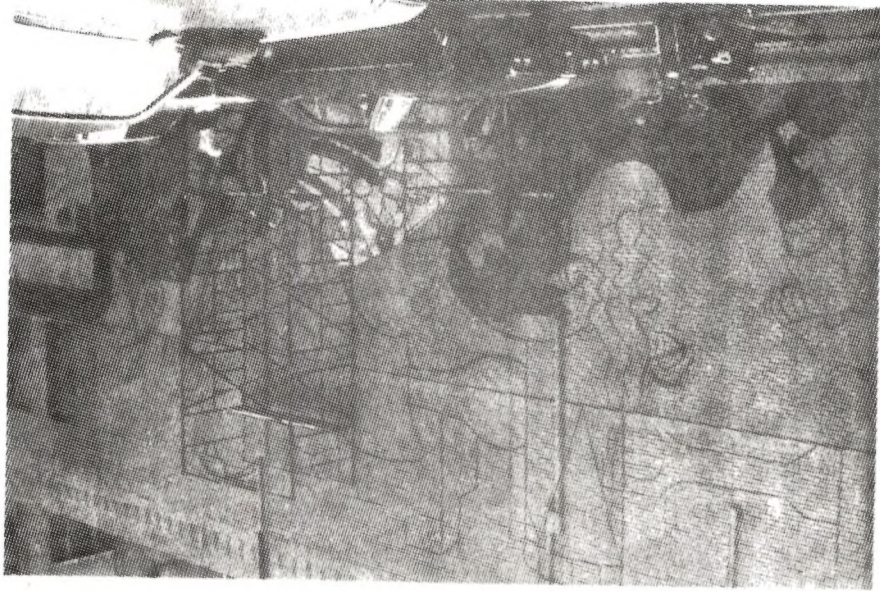
As far back as 1878, radical activist William Morris felt that artists had an obligation to mankind to bring beauty into the streets and public places. But is beauty always enough? There are quite a few artists today decorating city walls, (The Murality Squad in Montreal; City Walls in New York City). They are enlivening drab areas and bringing art into the lives of people who would never go to art museums and galleries. But these artists are working isolated from the community residents who become their captive audience. Amy Goldin, art critic and writer, calls most of today's public art "private art in public places".¹

There is a tremendous need for public art today because of the fast growing multi-ethnic and low economic population of our North American cities along with our rapidly deteriorating environment. The vast marble encased structure known as an art museum has lost its relevance for most of our society. Linda Nochlin says, "the museum notion of art is art separated from any sense of the larger responsibility to the quality of life in all aspects and for all people."² Les Levine states, "what it will probably be important for museums to be doing within the next few years will be bringing in various underprivileged social groups in our society, presenting the museum as a community cultural laboratory rather than as a place that sets up high standards for aesthetics."³ Finally, Serge Chermayeff, Professor Emeritus, Department of Architecture, says, "this is a culture in which everything interacts; it is for that reason that we have to build new bridges between diverse sets of understanding."⁴

Therefore, I believe there is a need for public artists to become part of the social structure working alongside the people helping to give voice to the people's needs and desires as human beings.

The artists of the community mural movement work closely with local sponsoring organizations, such as churches, neighborhood settlement houses, and elementary, secondary public and private schools. The sponsor provides most of the supplies and equipment or raises funds to help purchase supplies. Community residents, especially youth, are involved in planning and painting the walls. Art is integrated into the process of community development. The residents are brought together in planning sessions to discuss problems and ideas most meaningful to them. They learn how to communicate these feelings through visual expression. In the process of changing their visual environment a sense of self-respect and community identity is achieved.





Many critics of the community mural movement are afraid that the individual artist is losing his sense of individuality and prostituting himself by working with "non-artists" on the same art work. They feel that art has to be the work of one person. Amy Goldin states that we tend to link the individual artist's personality with his art work and:

It is not necessary to think that way, in fact, in relation to architecture or to what we awkwardly call primitive art we don't think that way. Even when we can attach a maker's name to a dance mask or a cathedral we don't attribute the total artistic conception to one creative mind. Here we know that culture--traditions of belief and behavior shared by a lot of people over a considerable period of time is much more to the point. The work transcends individual capacity. No single person could create all the conditions that link the mask to its wearer or the dancer to the dance. Nor, single-handed could any one person assemble the range of materials, techniques and ideas that appear in a smallish church. We recognize such works as the creation of a whole society. Products like these are not the result of a single creative act but parts of an extended process. 5

I am not trying to equate the community mural movement's creations with the Chartres Cathedral. I am saying that this "movement" is the closest thing we have today to a meaningful public art as opposed to large scale wall decoration.

Art educators and social commentators such as Serge Chermayeff, Howard Conant, Vincent Lanier, and Ernest Van Den Haag, urge that aesthetic experience become an integral part of life. For example, Ernest Van Den Haag says, "Art is no longer part and expression of life, but a special and separate domain of the artist, a domain which should be worshipped and supported by his public, but not participated in. The artist still addresses--or thinks he addresses--the public, but there is no dialogue.⁶ John Dewey has stated that the mass of men and women should have the opportunity to produce art work and the art experience should be available to each person in an understandable form.

Aesthetic experience should become an integral part of life. Can this be accomplished if the people viewing the art are cut off from this art by their own daily experiences and values which make this art totally incomprehensible to them? An art educator could stand before a high school class in black Harlem,

or anywhere else, extolling the virtues of Rubens and Renoir, but aesthetic awareness cannot be forced from outside human experience.

Community muralists are not ignoring the aesthetic aspect of their art. They recognize the need for and seriously appreciate professional criticism. They send out press releases upon the completion of a mural hoping that local art critics will respond by commenting on the finished product, but community murals have been ignored by most of the art critics. This is unfortunate because in our present society aesthetic concerns should not be isolated from the cultural setting. "The only kind of art which can correspond to the artistic, ethical and social crises of our age is one which has lost the qualities of inter-subjective communication which were present in past epochs."⁷

Harold Hayden, art critic for the Chicago Sun-Times, is one of the few in his profession who recognizes the important impact of the community mural movement in its cultural setting. He makes it a point to comment on each year's newest murals. For example, here is a quote from one of his columns: "There is a new outdoor mural in Chicago which combines a message in pictorial symbols that anyone can read with formal art values that lays claim to serious consideration as fine art."⁸ The mural referred to is entitled "Breaking the Grip". It depicts residents struggling to undermine the power of the absentee landlord. "Breaking the Grip" is a relevant statement for and by the people of the area. It demonstrates to the local property owners, and local residents an example of community solidarity and awareness of existing problems, and it is an aesthetic creation as well. Brian O'Doherty, director of the Visual Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, sees the community mural movement as "introducing the idea of the community as the conscience of a work of public art."⁹

Community mural art is a means by which the residents of a community can look at themselves and their problems and develop alternatives to alienation, frustration, and irrational violence. In the summer of 1973, two artists from the Chicago Mural Group, four students from the Chicago Board of Education Area C Summer Art Enrichment Program, and local residents, completed a mural on the wall of the Holy Covenant Church. Upon completion of the project, the Reverend of the Church sent a letter of gratitude to the director of the project. The following is a quote from that letter:

Well, we did it. In spite of the condition of the Church and in spite of the fears of some of the congregation, our "window toward the world" is sompleted and is a joy for every

one of us. There were times during the weeks and months of planning and debating over who we are when I wondered whether we would ever be able to speak of ourselves in the way that would make it possible for you to express that on the wall. But of course you did, and you did it beautifully and the bonus for us was that we now have a clearer idea of who and what our ministry is to be.

This mural, "For a New World", received the 1973 Chicago Beautiful Award. I see this as an affirmation of the relevance of the community mural movement and community based public art.

Chicago has more than one hundred and thirty-five community murals, most of which are on outdoor walls. Public acceptance and enthusiasm for this art is constantly increasing. Every year more community organizations seek out the mural groups to obtain assistance in conceiving and executing murals for their neighborhoods.

Today's man is searching for an image of himself and for his identity in society. Community muralists can help in this search by creating a visual dialogue between men wherever there is a need.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Amy Goldin, "The Esthetic Ghetto: Some Thoughts About Public Art", Art In America, May-June, 1974, pp. 31-45.
- ² Linda Nochlin, "Museums and Radicals: A History of Emergencies", Museums In Crisis, Brian O'Doherty (Ed.), Geo. Brazille, 1972, p. 25.
- ³ Les Levine, "The Great American Art Machine", New Ideas in Art Education, Gregory Battock (Ed.), E.P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1973, p. 27.
- ⁴ Ibid., Serge Chermeyeff, "The Shape of Humanism", p. 8
- ⁵ Ibid., Amy Goldin, P. 33
- ⁶ Ernest Van Den Haag, "Art and The Mass Audience", Museums In Crisis, Brian O'Doherty, (Ed.), Geo. Brazille, 1972, p. 69.
- ⁷ Gillo Dorfles, "Art and the Public: Education for Mutual Understanding", Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism, 16:June, 1958, p. 494.
- ⁸ Harold Haydon, Chicago Sun-Times, Friday, Aug. 24, 1973, p. 77

- 9 Brian O'Doherty, "Public Art and The Government: A Progress Report", Art In America.

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THE PHENOMENON OF VISUAL REPRESENTATION

Tony Honeyborne

On examine certaines fonctions relatives au dessin d'un objet. Les fonctions réciproques de la représentation visuelle--observation, imagination, mémoire, perception et expérience--alimentent une discussion axée sur le phénomène de la représentation visuelle.

La division entre le sentiment et la pensée fait l'objet d'une analyse approfondie relative à l'expérience esthétique ainsi qu'à l'objet d'art.

Part I

This essay explores some of the functions undertaken in the drawing of an object. The process possesses many facets when the drawing function is being carried out by the subject, not to mention the problems of interpretation by the experimenter and observer.

The common factor between the drawing and the observer is language; both communicate. A relationship between art and language is fundamental to this study. This would presuppose that language or symbolism is seen in the drawing by the observer.

The problem, or task, for the person drawing is the representation of experience. I do not mean copy, but the representation of objective and subjective qualities in drawing.

No intention here is made to discuss the psychology of meaning, but to deal with some of the functions of human interaction when discussing visual phenomenon. The phenomena are defined as representation, observation, imagination and memory, perception and experience. The following defines their characteristics. First, the word representation is used in a literal sense; that is, something (visual world, visual field) has been represented, such as the representative function of a symbol. The philosophic problem that non-representation may represent nothing would be countered by the phenomenological objectivity of something (object/event) or degrees of such. The object/event represented may possess completely different characteristics from the interpretation of it. If the object or event drawn is naturalistic (representational), it will represent itself rather than the actual object which

will represent itself in a different way. The person drawing, therefore, makes an interpretation of the object/event. So what in fact does a person represent in a drawing? The drawer possesses the interactive processes; the object/event exists in space and mass, and visually, creates an image. This may be represented by visual components, i.e. shape, texture, form, line, colour and surface.

Secondly, the observer response to an object/event will be conditioned by experience and interactive functions. Concepts can be formulated about the logical form of the object/event but expressiveness may be the result of a gesture, emotion, or experience, in an object/event. The spectator or drawer must possess the idea of expressiveness as the result of accumulated experience. The object/event triggers these responses and then it may cease to be a physical object but possessive of physical characteristics. An object in reality is three-dimensional, meaning that only planes of the object can be seen at any one instance, and this required interpretation by the drawer to make an object appear three-dimensional on a two-dimensional plane. At the risk of oversimplification, some representation in drawing is used to create this illusion. The function of observation, then, appears to be a trainable factor in analysis of art objects.

The third function, imagination and memory, splits concept and expression. Collingwood makes a distinction between thought and feeling:

Thus imagination resembles feeling in this, that its object is never a plurality of terms with relations between them, but a single indivisible unity: a sheer here-and-now. The conceptions of past, future, the possible, the hypothetical, are as meaningless for imagination as they are for feeling itself. They are conceptions which appear only with a further development of thought.¹

Thought, which implies memory in a cognitive sense, rationalizes imagination and makes possible abstraction. Possible channels for verbalized thought as abstraction in visual terms are: harmony, beauty, order, pattern and structure. However, the source of imagination according to Collingwood is manifested in language.

Langer² talks about the interpretable parts of symbols, containing a hidden content. Piaget postulates a basic archetypal language rooted in myth and explainable through metaphor. Intellectualised language which can contain emotion is interpreted by concept. This is a major problem in art, the relation of feeling and thought, intuition and knowledge. Kant takes the aesthetic idea as being a representation of the imagination to which no concept is adequate.

If the drawer uses concepts about the object it is because the language used creates concepts about the object; the problem is how much of the drawing is feeling and how much is conceptual.

The fourth function, perception and experience or sensory experience are the intermediaries between all the interactive functions and the object/event. Perception is certainly experimental rather than a priori³ and our perception of objects is not likely to be the same as another's. The physiological aspect of perception is partially rooted in the discipline of psychology and needless to say it is not the main concern of the aesthetician. An acceptable definition of perception is explained by kinaesthesia in terms of object/event: boundaries, contours, edges, etc. Wollheim⁴ states that when a drawing is understood by the spectator the degree of configuration disappears.

Further, the Gestalt theory states that the capacity to discriminate any element in the visual field depends upon our power to see it on something else. We can see a picture simultaneously as a configuration and as a representation.

Part II

This part will attempt to trace some outlines of the interactive functions in further detail. The multi-complexity of the problem is only too apparent; two directions are indicated in attempting to define a working procedure in drawing, language (feeling and thought) and visual phenomenon.

Representation.

What kind of a process is visual representation? When we represent something is it possible to represent all the qualities and characteristics of something? The process of representation will be different according to experience (individual and collective) and that the representation of a lion has different characteristics from when we see the real thing. Object, event and experience are capable of providing different experiences and on different levels. Goodman makes the point:

An object resembles itself to the maximum degree but rarely represents itself; resemblance, unlike representation, is reflective.⁵

When an object resembles itself we have a common notion, i.e. chair (something with four legs for sitting on), I would call this function. When the chair represents itself it takes on characteristic qualities and its purpose becomes less immediate.

The qualities commonly used in art analysis--form, shape, contour, line, texture, dimension and surface--have both immediate and less immediate characteristics. Objects and works of art may refer to both in varying degrees. Immediate qualities exist in the external world and less immediate in the internal world. The external world is one of concrete functions and the internal one of sensations.

Ernst Gombrich insists that there is "no" innocent eye (our past experiences and the physiological processes). Discussing the idea of knowing as a processing of raw material received from the senses, Goodman uses a Kantian dictum "the innocent eye is blind and the virgin mind empty."

In existential philosophy, the felt existence is stated by Kaelin as:

...we enter into (the world) merely by being born and continuing to live. As we interact with the objects of nature, other living things, and our own bodies to express our impulses, we may enlarge or restrict this world of raw human experiences. Physical infirmities may restrict it and by dint of compensation the infirmity may become a means of enlarging its scope.⁶

So in any functioning, art activity, accumulated experience of both the artist and spectator, will become apparent in looking and perceiving. In this vital dialogue, aesthetic experience evolves. The means of interpretation will be symbolic, relating to sensations and behavioural patterns. Plastic, gestural, symbolic and descriptive factors are capable of this. Symbolic systems have both literary, visual and non-visual factors.⁷ Metaphor is used in literary systems. Goodman uses representation of, and representation as, the distinction being "as". As, codifies the underlying aspect of representation. Then the crucial question is, how "conscious" is the artist of the underlying process?

⁷ Benevenuto Croce as a leading Expressionist Aesthetician, associates art as a form of language and that words are usually inadequate to cover all our expressed feelings.

Imagination.

Collingwood sees imagination as a feeling part of the thought process, stating that language comes into existence with imagination as a feature of experience at the conscious level.⁸ Kaelin⁹, however, places imagination as the cognition of represented objects. The intuitive response connects mentally to feeling and knowledge connects to thought.

The traditional division is between, knowing (cognition, memory) and feeling (intuition); imagination being the linking factor. However, as we shall see in the study it is difficult to separate them and they both interact in art activity. The artist does his thinking in the qualitative media: thought more immediately embodied in materials.¹⁰ Experience and symbol are capable of uniting in a pragmatic way. Dewey states:

For the uniquely distinguishing features of aesthetic experience is exactly the fact that no such distinction of self and object exists in it. Since it is aesthetic in the degree in which organism and environment cooperate to institute an experience in which the two are so fully integrated that each disappears.¹¹

Cognition is clearly shown here by Dewey. Wollheim interprets knowledge, as that which we presuppose a crude image of beforehand. Some dispositional form of knowledge about that we have done or felt becomes actualiser. Further Wollheim points to an "inner image" and he sees the idea of knowledge and intention as conflicting.

Perception and Experience.

Perception can be the accumulation of sensory experience and will be influenced by training, culture and physical infirmity. It is the basic level we operate on. Any aspect including response and making in art activity will be controlled by our relative experiences to action, knowledge, representation and a search for truth. Goodman states: "The eye moves relative to what it sees."¹²

The factor necessary to mold perception is imagination and imagination must interact with sensory perception. Existentialists call this phenomenological structures of perception. Heidigger claims that the painter is entirely visual. His work begins with the past (perception) is interpreted in the light of the future (imagination) and culminates in a new and meaningful present. This is a contrary view to Collingwood for whom imagination is intermediate between the psyche and the intellect.

Our perception of an object/event and our experience are not one and the same thing. Common factors of perception are in communication, and also will be affected by our personal and collective experience and the state of the object/event or experience, e.g. objects in oblique light; hallucinatory states.

Expression and Language

Ortega-Y-Gasset, the Spanish philosopher and aesthetician takes the idea of observation to operate on levels. He uses the example of persons attending a dying man -- each sees the event in his own way; each viewpoint being unique. Expression, the projection of the emotion, can have various levels of meaning. Wollheim explains the expressive modes in language, i.e. sensuousness as giving a gestural signal in a work of art (kine-aesthia), also the isolating of natural objects matching our feelings, i.e. a bitter day, bitter being the operative word. I would place at this point the aesthetic object being intentionally restricted by human experience and, therefore, aesthetic experience being diversified.

Croce considers aesthetic experience to be the spectator's own emotional states embodied in sensuous objects, whether real or imaginary. The expression of feeling is to be sharply distinguished from the deliberate arousal of it, and Collingwood talks of the emotion inside of a person which is turned into imagination by language which is already inherent. Expressionists tend to think alike on these points. Langer states that language fails to convey all visual meanings, further stating that expression is the objectification of subjectivity. The problem rests though not inexplicably in the nature of language structure. Discursive language creates patterns which relate to concept formation, but they cannot objectify the emotional aspect present. Her relationships can be stated graphically as follows:

Logical Form
conceptual

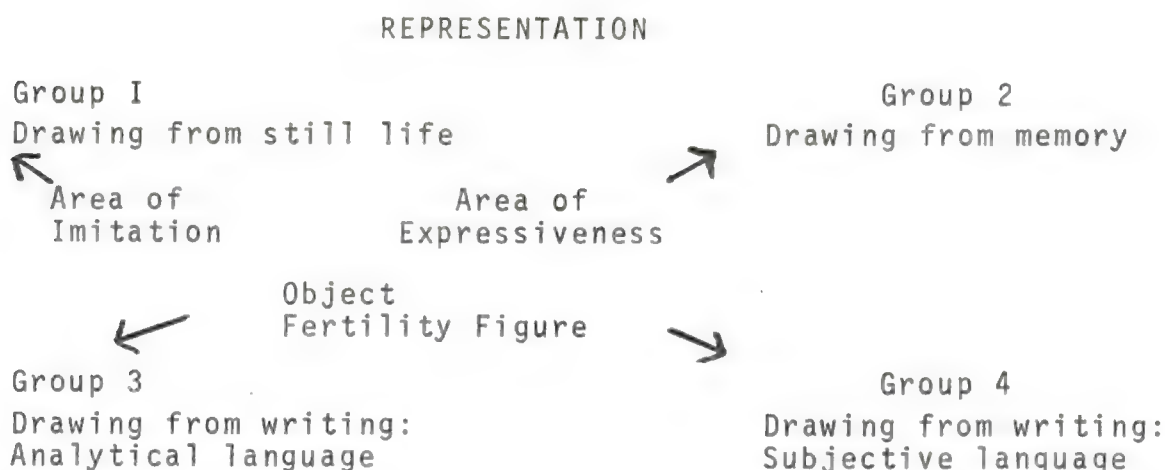
Expressive Form
feeling

Langer maintains that art expression or expressive form is sentient to the structure of the art object and is metaphorical in its relation to language.¹³

Part III

With the above definitions in mind, a descriptive study about these interactive functions was undertaken in a graduate aesthetics class during November 1974. Each member of the class was asked to produce a drawing of an African fertility figure, from four different orientations. The group was divided into four parts, each working independently from one another. Each

group and member was given specific instructions to adhere to. They were given the following diagrammatic outline of the investigation:



The variables in this structure were time and materials: the time was thirty minutes and the paper was uniform (the size of reproductions) and pencils were used.

Group 1. Drew the object with the object in front of them for the whole time.

Group 2. Saw and handled the object for three minutes and then drew it from memory.

Group 3. Drew from a written analytical description of the object (see appendix A)

Group 4. Drew from a written subjective description of the object (see appendix B)

Each member of the group produced drawings according to the orientation of their group. The four reproductions at the end of part III show some specific characteristics.

Group 1. Of the three drawings in this group, two were visual and one haptic (kineaesthetic) to use Lowenfeld's terminology. The components of the object were indicated clearly by members of this group and the relationship of parts resembled the object, though various techniques were used to emphasize the form and structure of the object. The overall impression of the object was more accurately related to the actual object.

Qualities like solidity were indicated as the object has physiological associations. Most of the motif details were included. The problem was that of the imitating the way the object appeared.

Group 2. Of the three drawings in this group, all memorised specific characteristics and nuances of the actual object. The relationships between the form of the components was less accurately noted. The features of the object, breasts, eyes, and mouth were individually accentuated or reduced in a sensory way. It would be irrelevant to say that these drawings are more expressive than group 1.

Group 3. Of the two drawings in this group, both showed a distinct approach in the use of concepts of the object. The problem of describing a visual form proved the semantic difficulty of writing a completely analytical description. The language used created concepts and the drawings were constructed by the use of concepts.

One drawing indicated the pattern of working procedures drawn and overdrawn. The other was deduced from the description, and in fact, the appearance was guessed, as the subjective aspect could not be conveyed by analytic language. No personification of surface motif details in a sensory way was indicated in either drawing. The problem seems to be that when a concept is linguistically stated, it is unable to convey a visual impression in an expressionistic manner.

Group 4. Of the two drawings in this group both indicated a non-objective response in the sense that the object was not reproduced in a likeness of the original object. The form was broken down into a semblance of the object.

The subjective language created an expressive response to the description inasmuch as the language describes subjective experience. The significant difference was that the object was related by the drawers to sentience and environment. The problem was that non-technical language is more emotive and sensory than objective or scientific language.

Conclusions of the Study:

The ability to draw varied among group members and the actual context of group orientation tended to indicate the direction of result. In the organization of drawings, some definite schema was established in each group. It was the arrangement of schema that changed from slightly to significantly between groups. The "area of imitation", in using the word in the sense of copy or reproduction G-1, G-3, indicated that concepts are very likely to be made about certain problems of representation. Visual and semantic problems make any naturalistic representation impossible in the sense of direct copy.

Expression was indicated in G-1, G-2, G-4, and probably though less less evidently in G-3. The individuals themselves varied in their interpretation of expression in their finished drawing.

The relationship between language and expression tended to

corroborate Collingwood's division of language into feeling and thought. The fundamental problem is whether or not the artist has to go through a certain set of procedures in order to achieve a result (Collingwood's philosophy)¹⁴, the result being expression, or that this can exist outside of a structure and interact randomly (Croce)¹⁵.

Part IV

How should the drawing process be understood in logical terms, if at all? Should it be considered as intuitive knowledge not mediated by any concepts¹⁶, or as an activity capable of conceptualisation, and adapt our approaches to art teaching.

Concepts have been shown in the study to be capable of being made about an object and objectivating it, i.e. mass, volume, weight, surface, etc., but not capable of expressing the subjective qualities of an object. The process of imitation is not purely concept alone, because artistic interpretation will take place. Concept, therefore, may form a part of the making process though not the complete experience.

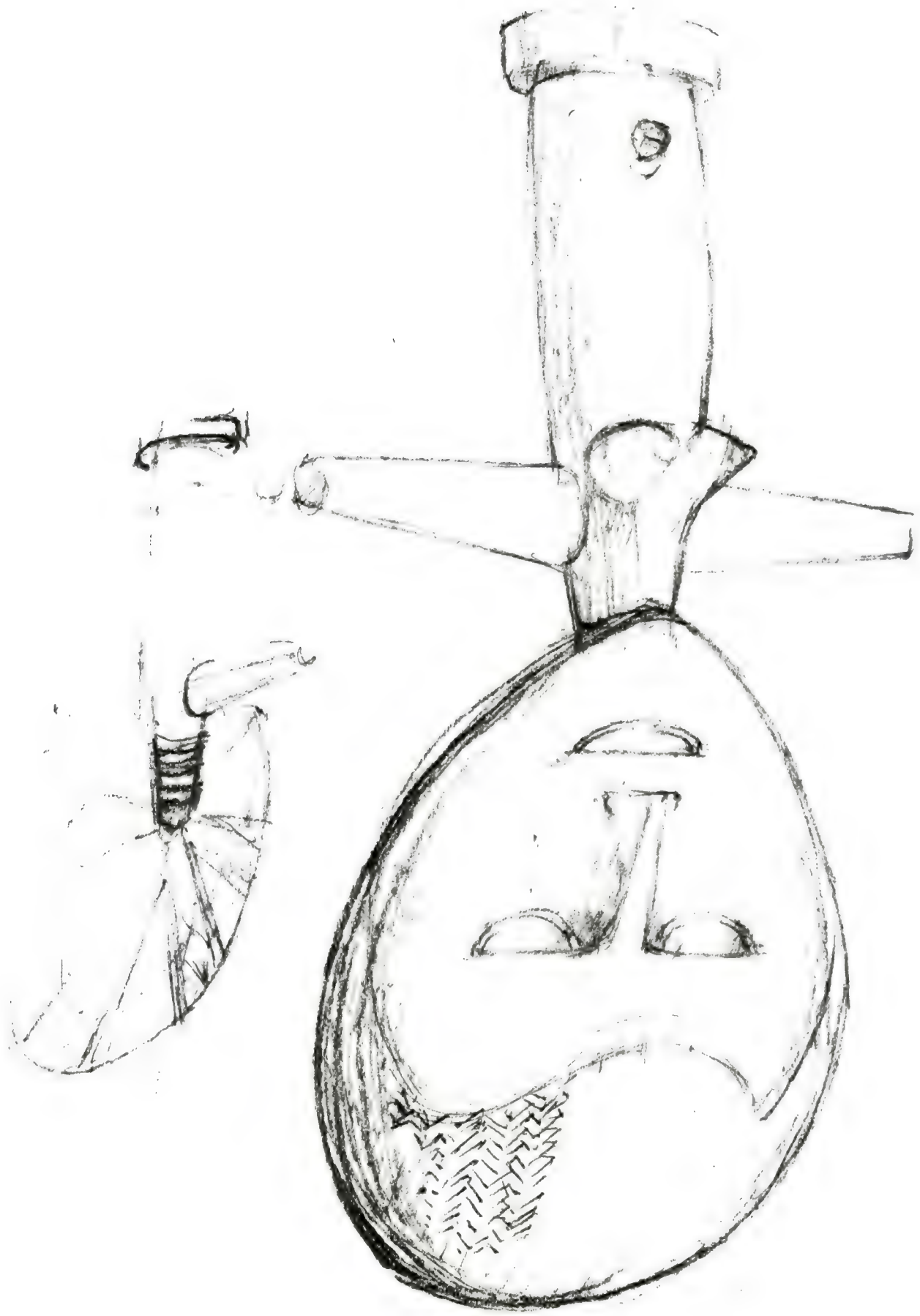
An important aspect of any artistic production is material, and the interaction of tools in a gestural sense (kineasthetic) with the material in a subjective manner. An objective manner would imply decisions about that which is being undertaken; subjective would lead to chance juxtapositions and sensory experience. In the study, pencil and paper constituted materials which interacted, also the material surfaces of the object, both in G-1 G-2. Drawings in both groups used the quality of pencil marks to convey the structure of the fertility figure. The paper may have had certain surface qualities that decided some aspect of the drawing. G-3 significantly reduced the emphasis on material qualities, and the drawings themselves lacked sensory qualities. G-4 indicated that language tended to describe the experience rather than the material. The sensory nature was conveyed through words which may have material connotations. These connotations could be conveyed by plastic factors.

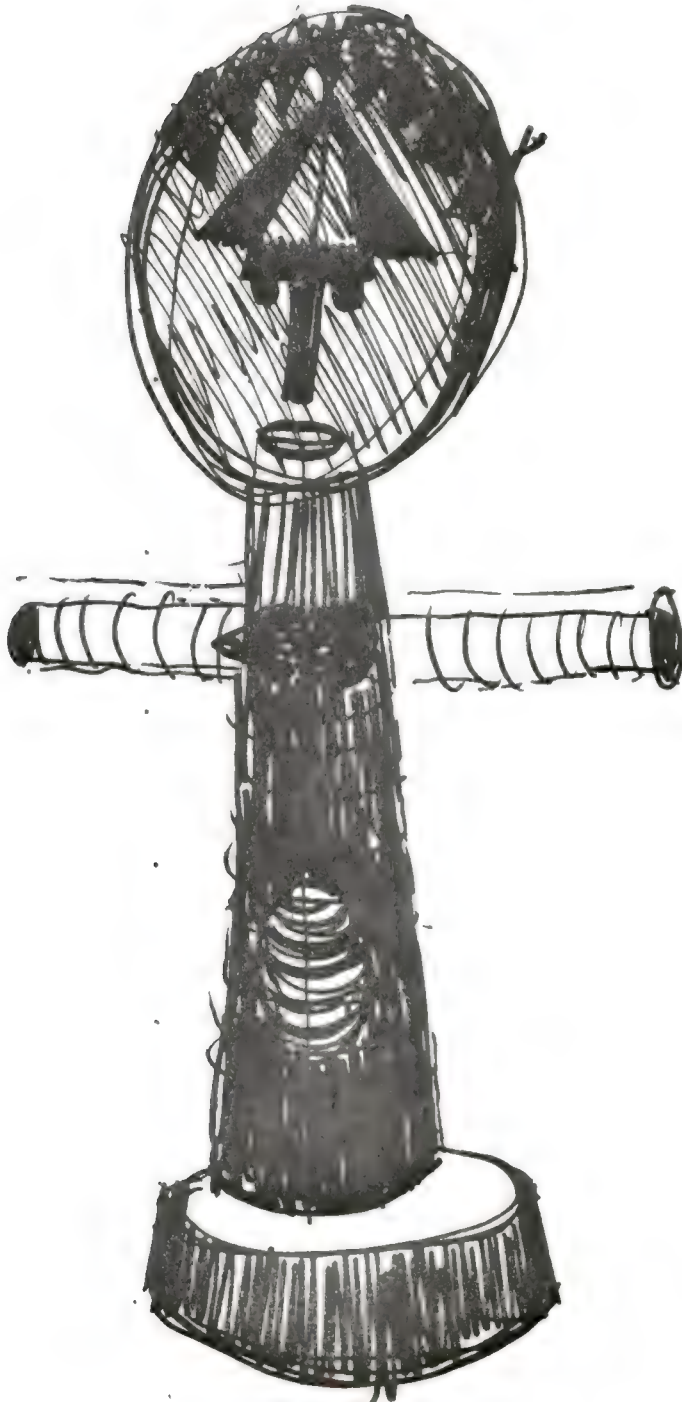
The problem of transforming sensory experience into plastic visual form is vitally important in art activity, and may prove to be the phenomenological basis of visual experience. Some degree of empathy must exist between the artist and the object(s) so that he is able to transform it into another object, and it is this recreating that provides personal aesthetic experience.

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(group 4)



APPENDIX A

The object is carved wood with the grain stained and polished. It is made up of round cylindrical and circular forms. The basic shape is a cross-form surmounted by a disc which is set at an angle (110 degrees), 10 degrees from the vertical. The object has three parts: the base, the middle (a crossed-shaped section), the top (a disc).

The Base. It is round, the height being approximately half the diameter of the base tapering slightly towards the top.

The Middle Cross-Shaped Section. From top to bottom, this part is five times the height of the base. The vertical part of this section is slightly smaller in circumference than the base and tapers to the top part of the cross-section which has circular rings incised on it. The horizontal, intersecting below the rings LH & RH extends for two-thirds of the given height so far either side of the vertical; the ends are ovoid in shape, and the diameter is half the height of the base. Motif on the vertical part of this section - draw a vertical in the exact middle of your drawing. Just above the base part on this line is a half-sphere, being $\frac{1}{4}$ of the radius of this part. At the intersection of the cross to the vertical, there are two cones having the same dimension as the former.

The Disc. The disc is one-third below its centre, parallel to the front of the cross-shaped section at an angle of 110 degrees from the vertical (10 degrees away from the top of the front of the cross-shaped section). On the surface of the disc, draw an imaginary line across from LH to RH (the disc being the third and final part), having a diameter equal to the height of the cross intersection to the base. A triangular line of two triangles (equal) are above this line. Below, a strongly raised "T" section with two half circles below the horizontal (each side). Below the vertical of "T" section is an ellipse with a horizontal running through it. A pattern repeated above the triangles consists of diamond shapes repeated.

APPENDIX B

I am the eternal notion of a circle astride my gaunt and rigid frame. My arms to poles for no limits or feeling can manipulate them in ceaseless swirl; stand trapped in the volume of base. I represent emotions, feelings, warmth, life and even joy; yet my trapped body cannot move -- cannot move. Still for time, I stand ponderously in shimmering wood under the torrid sun.

When night and day begin to meet to the sound of the resonant drum, and moonbeams, firelight, leopards' eyes, rhythmically look on. My anthropomorphic heart begins to stir to sacrifice ceremony and offering. My nubile breasts and soft mound look on.

My face veiled in stiffness with lines not yet light. My mouth fearing, fearing to touch the votive offerings. My hair as water ripples running before the wind. Men see these and hope, then fear, then live the coming seasons for I am their link to life and love. My rigid frame reaches out to eternity and back again.

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COLOR PREFERENCE AND COLOR CONNOTATION

Georgia N. McLellan

Cette investigation qui essaie de découvrir les préférences et signification des couleurs a été complétée par cent des cent vingt sujets choisis. Ces sujets (écoliers de l'élémentaire et du secondaire, étudiants, diplômés, institutrices professionnels, personnel de service, mères de famille, et retraites) dont l'âge varie de dix ans à plus de sixante, sont de deux sexes, habitent la ville et le banlieue et se divisent en cinq groupes d'âge. Le but de cette recherche est de déterminer si le sexe, l'âge ou la culture ont une influence sur les réponses et aussi de monter quelle importance cette recherche peut avoir sur l'éducation par l'art.

According to Johannes Itten, considered one of the world's greatest teachers in the art of color:

Color is life, for a world without color appears as dead....light, that first phenomenon of the world, reveals to us the spirit and living soul of the world through colors.¹

Colors are forces, radiant energies that affect us positively or negatively whether we are aware of it or not...The effects of color should be experienced and understood, not only visibly but also psychologically and symbolically...Discovery of relationships mediated by the eye and the brain, between color agents and color effects in man, is a major concern of the artist. ²

It is also a major concern of the art educator, philosopher, scientist and psychologist and the theme of this paper, which offers results of questioning, testing and evaluating as a measure toward finding answers to the questions: what does color mean to the individual? Do color preferences and connotations cross barriers of sex, age, race and cultures? Has the proliferation of color in our environment affected color symbolism inherent in Western civilization?

Art historians and color theorists point out that the variety and choice of colors we know by name today is a fairly recent phenomenon in man's history. Anderson states:

In earlier history there seem to be curious

gaps in man's knowledge of colors. Strange as it seems, early civilizations seem not to have perceived the number of colors that we perceive today. There is no way of knowing what they saw, but identification and significance can be judged by reference to literature. 3

Although the Indians, Egyptians and Greeks knew and named gold, red, black, white and purple with occasional references to yellow, green, grey, and blue, there seems to be a great deal of ambiguity as to which of these colors, as we know them today, the ancient literature referred. Brown and pink appear very infrequently, and orange, until quite recent times, was referred to as golden.

Dictionary definitions of color give references to light, race, pigment, dress, environment emblems and misrepresentation. Thus, it would appear that preference for colors and their meanings have close personal integration. This individual and collective color meaning must be fully explored and understood in order to use color as a vital means of communication. Wright and Rainwater believe that:

Thoughts and the words that mark them are manifestations of physiological functions, a central one of which is the perceptual system. Connotations or metaphorical meaning is a crucial aspect of thought. We would like to know if there is a stable relationship between connotation and perception. Color experience can be fairly well specified perceptually. If there are general connotative dimensions along which color is described, and if these dimensions are to some extent consistent from culture to culture, then there is evidence bearing on the existence and character of such a relationship. 4

In order to reach both practical and theoretical conclusions concerning the relationship between perception and connotation in the field of color, many researches have been undertaken. Lipps in 1903, Baldwin in 1906 and Winch in 1909 tested school children to determine color preference, but like that of Aars in 1899, most early research had so few subjects and so little color choice that the results are of doubtful value. Eysenck, reporting on subsequent researches into color preferences and connotation, says:

After fifty researches, very little agreement has been reached about (a) a general

order of preference for colors, (b) the relative popularity of saturated and unsaturated colors, or (c) differences in preferences between the sexes. Cohn, Dorcus and Von Allensch agreed that there was no agreement on these three points, whereas Walton, Guildord and Guilford maintained that there remains sufficient agreement upon color preference to indicate a biological cause for likes and dislikes of colors. 5

Granger supported Eysenck's own findings that the hypothesis of a general order of preference does in fact exist and that color appreciation is dependent upon a fundamental biological factor and not upon age, sex, racial or cultural differences. Granger found that it was inconsistent to suppose that cultural influences could account for the amount of interpersonal agreement found in Eysenck's comprehensive study and in previous investigations. Granger's research supported findings that color tests are objective -- independent of personal taste (relativistic meaning), dependent on objective stimulus properties (quantitative measuring). This conclusion was also supported by research done by Walton, St. George, Garth, Birren and Luckeish. Michaels found that verbal testing for color preferences and for connotation was as effective as visual testing. Dorcus, on the other hand, felt that in verbal testing the terminology would have different meaning to different individuals, the brightness factor would be confused between hues, and hues would differ in meaning. However, very little can be asserted about color in isolation, since in neither life nor art are they to be found out of context or relationship with other colors. Value, hue, saturation and context all play an integral part in color selection and color meaning. Therefore, to arbitrarily assign specific colors and suggest that a subject relate these to personal connotation seems somewhat unsatisfactory in determining a very personal reaction. If too few or too many values, hues and saturations are presented, one may confuse the subject and defeat the purpose of the research. Results obtained from a visual test, using the ten colors suggested verbally in this research, and given to the same first group of ten to twelve year olds school children of this research, indicated identical responses from both methods. For selection of hue, value, or chroma, for establishing preference between specific shades and tints, for preference between saturated and unsaturated colors, the visual method of research is obviously more valid. However, since this particular research was concerned with connotative response as well as color selection, it was decided to utilize the verbal approach. In their report on Visual Aesthetic Preference in Five Countries, Farley and Sun-Hye Ahn suggest that: "Most experimental psychological research into aesthetic preference for visual stimuli has been concerned with stimulus determinants of preference rather than subject or respondent determination."6

Implementation

A test consisting of 35 questions was prepared. Questions one to twelve were devised to establish personality factors which could have a relationship to color preference and connotation. Questions 11, 12, and 13 were devised to establish subject's ability to see and distinguish colors. Preference for colors, singly and in combination, was established by questions 14 and 23. Questions 15 to 22 tested subject's connotation of colors in a personal, social, emotional and environmental relationship. Answers to questions 25 to 30 established the degree of subject's color awareness. Questions 31 to 34 were designed to cross check questions 14 to 22. Question 35 was open-ended to allow subjects to verbalize "color meaning".

The questionnaire was completed by one hundred of the initial 127 chosen. Subjects ranged in age from 10 to over 60 years of age, of both sexes and were both urban and suburban residents. There were 5 groups established: twenty 10 to 12 year olds, 9 males and 11 females; twenty 13 to 20 years of age, 10 males, 10 females; 20 in the 21 to 30 year category, 10 males, 10 females; 30 between 31 and 50, 14 males and 16 females; and 10 in the above 50 years of age group, 4 males and 6 females. Subjects included school children, high school and college students -- some trained in art, some not, 15 graduate art students of various ages, 20 female elementary school teachers not trained in art, professional and service persons, housewives and retired individuals. In each group about a tenth of the group population was non-white. There was one set of young adult twins.

Since there was a slight imbalance of the sexes, all scoring was done by means where values were given, or by percentages where means could not be applied. Histograms were made for color preference by sex and age group. Color-divided bar graphs were used to illustrate color connotation by sex as a totality, male or female. Statistics are included herein.

When reference to visual color was requested, or deemed necessary to clarify ambiguity of shade, hue or saturation, Itten's 144 color plate was presented. This was used only three times to establish the "green" assigned to a racial example, to ascertain the quality of "pink" for pity and pretty and to determine what was inferred by "red", again for a racial group.

Findings (Color Preference)

Age did not appear to be a significant factor in color preference. Sex did not appear to affect color preference, in that both groups preferred blue and the mean difference between choices of the first six colors (primary and secondary) were minimal. Brown, white, black and grey were the least favored by both groups. Males appeared to prefer violet to yellow and females appeared to reverse that choice.

Color preferences in order of choice by sexes were:

Males: blue, green, violet, red, orange, yellow, brown, grey, white and black.

Females: blue, yellow, orange, red, green, violet, brown, white, black and grey.

This is at variance with the order reported by Graves, it being red, blue, violet, green, orange and yellow. He noted the popularity of yellow among males in the late nineteenth century. This research would indicate it is now more preferred by females, supporting Oswald Splenger's contention that "yellow and red are the popular colors, the colors of the crowd, of children, or women and of savages."⁷

Color preference by age groups showed some difference in order of preference, but differences between scores for individual colors indicated order to be of little significance.

Group 1. Age 10-12: blue, red, green, violet, orange, yellow, brown, black, white, grey.

Group 2. Age 13-20: blue, red, yellow, orange, green, white, brown, violet, grey, black.

Group 3. Age 21-30: yellow, blue, orange, red, green, brown, violet, white, black, grey.

Group 4. Age 31-50: blue, orange, green, yellow, violet, red, brown, black, white, grey.

Group 5. Age 50-60 plus: blue, violet, green, yellow, orange, brown, red, grey, black, white.

Researchers in color preference generally seem to agree that although men rate color more highly than women, women are more sensitive to color and their preferences are more likely to fluctuate than men's. Most researchers agree that individual differences between men and women is slight.

Color preferences of the subjects of this research would appear to substantiate Luckeish's theory that highly saturated and colors of lighter value are preferred and generally agree with Birren's order of preference. The preference section of this report would tend to support Eysenck's summary that:

There is a certain amount of agreement between the color preferences of people, regardless of race. This agreement is as high as that between intelligence tests.⁸

Findings (Color Connotation)

The second area of this research, associations and meanings

related to colors, indicates quite definite connotations that appear common to all ages, sexes, races and cultural groups represented by the subjects taking part in this survey. Findings agree with those published by Aldrich, Anderson, Birren, Eysenck, Itten, Graves, Michaels, Washburn and others which support the affective theory of color on the human psyche. Harlan states:

The emotional and symbolic implications, the temperament of individual colors has been the subject of a number of theorists, beginning with Goethe and his famous Theory of Color, published in 1810...The findings of color theorists are no less interesting for having been arrived at mainly by intuition rather than scientific analysis. Their comments often reveal an acute insight into man's associative faculties. ⁹

Those ideas, images, qualities or environmental factors considered good or pleasing were preponderantly associated with the colors white, red, blue, yellow, orange and green; whereas, those having bad or unpleasant connotation were associated with black or grey. Green, blue, violet and brown appeared to be used in both a positive and negative context. The following comparisons, taken from the research findings tabulated separately, will illustrate the above statement. Colors listed are those which reflected the majority of choice for each image or idea, in order of value.

<u>Positive</u>	<u>Negative</u>
GOOD - white, blue, yellow, green.	BAD - black, grey.
BEAUTY - blue, green, red, yellow.	UGLINESS - black, grey, brown.
LOVE - red, brown, yellow.	HATE - black, red.
HONEST - white, blue, yellow.	DISHONEST - black, grey.
BRAVE - red, blue, green.	AFRAID - black, yellow.
HAPPY - red, yellow, orange.	SAD - grey, blue, black.
WARM - red, orange, yellow.	COLD - blue, grey, white.
LIFE - yellow, red, white.	DEATH - black, grey, white.
WELL - red, yellow, blue.	SICK - grey, green, yellow.

Environmental ideas, seasons and physical appearance were generally associated with white, blue, green, brown, and violet. The greatest range of color connotation appeared in the section

concerned with shapes. Almost total agreement was reached about sky being blue, winter being white and cold (white, black, blue). Because red had connotations of violence, it appeared in both good and bad contexts. This is supported by Birren who says:

In the main, the colors of the spectrum are to be associated with two moods: the warm, active and exciting qualities of red and its analagous hues, and the cool, passive, and calming qualities of blue, violet and green...not many writers in the subject (color psychology), however, seem to be aware that a color may have contradictory qualities, depending upon the particular viewpoint of the observer...Thus no list of color associations is adequate unless it takes into consideration subjective as well as objective aspects. For reactions will differ as a person associates color with the outside world or with himself.¹⁰

It was interesting to note that almost all of the subjects related the color they gave as first or second choice, and as applied to virtues, to themselves!

Association of color to racial groups appeared to be quite literal, either black, brown, red (bronze) or olive green. Anglo-saxons were designated as white; East and North American Indians as black or brown; Italians, Spaniards and Greeks as brown or black, (possibly reference to hair coloring), and olive green. The most interesting results obtained in the racial grouping question came from the color associations with French, there being an almost equal distribution of white, yellow, green and red. A psychologist might find this interesting as a reflection of attitudes in this largely French-Canadian province.

In this study, one open-ended question was included in an attempt to have the subjects verbalize individual meanings for "color" as a composite. There were as many meanings as there were responses, ranging from the pragmatic to the poetic. Subjects who were involved in art education or art study gave physical connotations generally, but the majority of responses indicated a strong psychological reaction to color. Color symbolism and the subjective perception and discrimination of colors appear to be important psychological factors. In addition to the scientific explanations of color, responses generally tended to give connotations such as: life, love, beauty, harmony, happiness, visual experience, environment, nature, personality, mood and individuality. An interesting deduction from these responses is that although the subjects used a full palette of color connotations, color per se appears to have a positive rather than negative connotation.

To pursue the subject of color preference and connotation in

an effort to discover which is more affective in the mind of the subject -- in effect, to answer the "which comes first" aspect in order to resolve the "why" of color psychology -- might require the use of more open-ended questions; although this type of investigation would be very time consuming, the results might well justify the effort.

Implications for Art Education

Since no novel or earth-shaking discoveries about color preference or color connotation was made by this research, one might well question its relevance to art education. It is suggested that a content so charged with emotional impact, so intrapersonal in nature and so universal in response has a great potential as a learning and communications media. Color, its connotation and symbolism, needs to be explored in depth to determine basic dimensional measurements and how to relate these to individual differences. Application of this knowledge should make color a powerful tool for educators to use wisely and well for advancement of communication and creativity. Feldman, in describing Rothko's use of color says:

Rothko appears to be seeking a way of changing the viewer's mode of consciousness through color, an objective unlike that of Kandinsky who sought to communicate emotions, while Gottlieb seeks to communicate an idea through form and color. It appears that Rothko wants painting to seize the consciousness to get behind man's thoughts and feeling. This achievement would be comparable to affecting human experience through color in a manner which is now possible through drugs or some mystic discipline.¹¹

Although Birren and advertisers are very conscious of the commercial application of color selection and color connotation, art educators must agree with Wright and Rainwater that "we want to know in what way people speak of color so that we can more effectively discuss and study its use in visual communication."¹²

Findings of an experiment by Francis M. Dwyer on the effectiveness of colored illustrations in a teaching situation indicated that the use of visuals in color to complement oral instruction, facilitated learning and improved understanding of the subject content far more effectively than the use of black and white illustrations or content presented without visuals of any kind.¹³ Thus it could be assumed that art educators with a thorough grounding in the psychological inferences of color association should contribute to the preparation of visuals for all educational disciplines.

Readings on the subject of color preference and color meaning indicate that the perception of color is a very complex

process, not yet completely understood. However, although differences in color perception and so-called color-blindness may limit color vision in individuals, detailed and serious teaching in this specific area of art education should develop more sensitivity in color response by students. Although no color theory exists that completely explains color vision, we know that it is a mechanical and physiological process closely related to the individual's psychology. Art educators would be well advised to learn and teach in depth the elements of color to help individuals from kindergarten to university level begin to see the dimensions of color as it is used both impressively and expressively.

Elementary school children can be helped by experimentation to discover color relations. This teaching can and should be enlarged as the student progresses through the whole range of school attendance, with the cultural implications, historical significance and nomenclature keeping pace with the broadening knowledge of color potential, so that communication between user and creator in art, architecture and environment will be conducive to artistic maturity.

To ensure the individual and collective realization of the positive connotations of color indicated by this research, art educators would need to insist that a basic requirement for all teacher trainees would be adequate instruction in color physics, physiology and psychology supplemented by active experimentation and creation involving color. Exploitation of color need not remain the private preserve of the marketplace -- art education can insure that it becomes public.

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NOTES

- ¹ Johannes Itten, The Art of Color (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corp., 1961) p. 13.
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- ⁴ B. Wright/L. Rainwater, "The Meanings of Color", Journal of General Psychology, Vol 67, 1962, 88-89, (Reprinted Psychology and the Visual Arts, Penguin Books, 1970, p. 331.
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APPENDIX 1.

COLOUR PREFERENCE BY SEX AND AGE OF 100 SUBJECTS

AGE	WHITE		BLACK		BROWN		GREY		RED		BLUE		YELLOW		ORANGE		GREEN		VIOLET	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
10-12 yrs.	2.0	3.1	2.7	2.9	4.6	3.2	2.5	1.3	7.7	6.7	8.0	8.3	3.3	7.0	6.0	6.5	7.0	7.0	6.5	7.0
(20)	2.5		2.8		3.8		1.9		7.2		8.1		5.1		6.2		7.0		6.7	
13-20 yrs.	5.0	5.4	3.0	4.5	4.6	5.0	3.6	4.4	5.0	6.4	6.0	8.8	4.0	7.4	5.5	5.8	7.0	4.0	6.5	1.8
(20)	5.2		3.7		4.8		4.0		6.7		7.4		5.7		5.6		5.5		4.6	
21-30 yrs.	4.4	4.0	3.0	3.6	5.2	4.5	3.5	4.2	5.4	5.4	6.8	6.8	5.9	7.4	6.8	5.4	4.8	5.6	6.2	2.4
(20)	4.2		3.3		4.7		4.1		5.4		6.4		6.6		6.1		5.2		4.3	
31-50 yrs.	1.2	5.2	1.2	5.4	4.4	3.2	3.2	3.0	5.4	6.2	8.0	6.4	6.6	5.9	6.0	8.0	7.2	5.9	5.2	6.8
(20)	3.2		3.3		3.6		3.1		6.8		7.2		6.2		7.0		6.5		6.0	
50-60 yrs.	2.6	2.4	3.0	2.3	4.0	4.6	3.5	2.2	4.5	3.6	6.0	6.4	6.0	6.0	4.0	4.6	5.2	5.6	6.0	5.0
(10)	2.5		2.6		4.3		2.7		4.0		6.2		5.0		4.3		5.4		5.5	

() indicates number in each group.

Each color chosen on value scale 1 to 10.

second line indicates average score for each group.

Appendix 2.

COLOUR PREFERENCE IN ORDER OF CHOICE

10 - 12 yrs.	M	Blue	red	green	violet	orange	brown	yellow	black	grey	white
	F	Blue	yellow green violet	red	orange	brown	white	black	grey		
13 - 20 yrs.	M.	green	violet	blue	white orange	brown	yellow	grey	black		
	F	blue	yellow	red	orange	white	brown	black	grey	green	violet
21 - 30 yrs.	M	blue	violet	yellow	red	brown	green	white	grey	black	
			orange								
	F	yellow	blue	green	orange	brown	grey	white	black	violet	
					red						
31 - 50 yrs.	M	blue	green	orange	yellow	red	violet	brown	grey	black	white
	F	orange	violet	blue	red	yellow green	black	white	brown	grey	
51 - 60	M	blue violet yellow green	red	brown	orange	grey	black	white			
	F	blue	green	violet	orange	brown	red	yellow	white	black	grey

IMAGES AND IDEAS ASSOCIATED WITH VERBALIZATION OF COLOURS BY NAME

Each score represents responses from 100 subjects

Image	White		Black		Brown		Grey		Red		Blue		Yellow		Orange		Green		Violet	
OR Idea	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<u>Environment</u>																				
Home	6	4			6	2			6	8	4		2	8	4	2	7	21	2	
Church	22	14	4	2	8	12	2	2	6	8	2	4	3	1			4		2	
School	2		8	6	4	2	3	11	17	9	2				4		6	16		
Resort		2			1				3		10	14	2	8	4		14	6		
Office	2	8	2		7	9	13	11			6	4		2		6	6			
Club	4	2			2			6	4	4	8		4	2		10	6	12	3	1
Sky	2										50	48								
Hills					12	4	2	2						2			24	26		8
Sea											31	25					10	18		
Plains					14	16		2					16	18	4	3	8	6		
<u>Seasons</u>																				
Summer		1							4	4	4	4	16	18	6		12	20		
Winter	38	34	2				10				4	2								
Spring		2					2				2	2	7	7		2	23	25		2
Fall					8	6			10	10		2	4	8	12	20	2			2
<u>Activities</u>																				
Work	6	4	2	8	4	4	7	5	6	4	2	8	3	3	4	4	4	2		
Play	2	2							4	6	4	4	4	14	2	8	10	8		
<u>Shapes</u>																				
Square	4	2	4	8		2	4		11	9	11	7	2	2		2		2		
Rect- angle		4	1	3	2	4	4			4	8	2	4	10	2	12	2	12		
Tri- angle	1	3	3	1	2		2		4	6	4	10	5	7	9	7	6	2		
Cyl- inder	4	8		2		4	2	8	2	2	4	4	7	5	4	4		2		

Image or Idea	White		Black		Brown		Grey		Red		Blue		Yellow		Orange		Green		Violet	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
<u>Shapes con't</u>																				
Cone	6	2	2	2	8	20	3	1			1	3	10	6	4	6		2		
Pyramid	2	2	2		10	16	2	8	8	4	2	2	7	7	2		4	2	2	4
Circle	7	8		6					14	12	2	6	2	11	2		2		4	
<u>Descriptive Words and Words with Emotional Content</u>																				
Good	4	12						2	6		9	11	10	12	5	5	12	6		
Bad			20	26	4	2	14	6		2	2							4		
Honest	9	19									14	6	6	8	3	3	2	4		
Dis-honest	2		14	24	6	5	6	4			2		6	5			2	5		
Happy									17	19	2	2	14	10	4	6	2	2		
Sad	2		6	2	4	2	9	17			8	12							6	
Warm									23	13	2		7	7	4	18	4	2		
Cold	10	6	4				12	8			14	30	2						2	4
Tall	6	6		4	4	6	8	4		2	4	14	4	2	2		1	5		2
Short	9	7	6	6	2	4	2	4	4		12	6	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
Thin	4	10	2	8		2	6	4	3		3		2	8			2	2	2	
Fat	4	2	5	6		8	2	4	2	10		2	5	11	4		2		3	
Sick	7	3	2	4	2	4	4	12	4	4	1	8	6	6	3		7	9		
Well		2				4			15	17	6	4	7	9		6	4	2		
Strong		6			4	8			8	16	14	12					2		2	
Weak	7	9	2		1	5	9	9		4	2	2					4		4	
Pretty	2		1						21	24			2	10	2		3	5	2	
Ugly		2	10	14	4	8	10	12					4						6	
Beautiful	1								6	6	6	15	8	4	1	5	3	13	1	3

Image	White		Black		Brown		Grey	Red	Blue	Yellow	Orange	Green		Violet	
Words with Emotional Content (con't)															
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Love		2						20	24	4	8	6	4		2
Hate	1		12	26	1		7	1	12	20		1	2	4	2
Pity	2	6	4		2			8	2	2	2	6	4		3
Scorn	1	1	7	7	4	14	6	6	4	6	4	2		4	6
Life	12	2							10	8	2	4	12	14	2
Death	6	2	32	34		2	2	6	2					3	5
Afraid		2	11	15	2	2	4	10	6	2		7	5	2	
Brave	2	4			3	3			16	20	11	9		4	4
Open	19	17							4	6	10	6	6	2	4
Shut			32	34			4	8	2	3		2			2
Ethnic Groups	Note: For red read "pink", for green read "olive" when # used for yellow read "beige", for orange read "bronze"														
Anglo-Canadian	32	32			2	2			#6	#4	2	2	4	2	2
N. A. Indian			2	2	10	14			21	25		2	2		
Indian	2		2	2	16	20			14	8		4	6	2	
Negro			36	30	10	14						4	4	2	
Italian	3	3	8	8	10	16			2	4		6	2	4	4
Spanish	4	4	7	7	12	18			2	4		6	4	6	#4
Greek	4	8	2	8	16	10	4	2		2	4		2	2	#4
French	10	8		2	4	4			#8	#6	2		8	8	2

THE AESTHETIC EXPERIENCE

Joan Walters

Cet article traite de l'esthétique par l'intermédiaire de l'expérience esthétique. Il analyse et définit le phénomène grâce à une recherche littéraire qui inclut les écrits de Dewey, Collingwood et Berleant. L'expérience esthétique est définie comme "une interaction spécifique et unifiée entre un sujet qui perçoit et un objet ou un événement perçu par les sens, déterminé par le champ esthétique dans lequel il a lieu. Cette interaction qualitative est immédiate, intuitive intense et profonde, pas intellectuelle et non concrète." Les variations de l'expérience esthétique sont expliquées par le concept du champ esthétique. Cet article conclut avec des implications pour l'éducation dans le domaine de l'art.

Most analyses of the nature of art begin from one of two starting points: the artist or the work of art. But there is a third viewpoint to be considered, that of the viewer, the audience, the receiver. Much has been done to determine the artist's role in the creative process and to define the nature of the work of art, but much less has been done in the third category, to determine the nature of the aesthetic experience.

What does it mean to say that someone is having an aesthetic experience? In all the literature on aesthetics it is impossible to find a direct and concise answer to this question. Some writers claim that there is no such thing as an aesthetic experience, only experiences which may be qualified by the presence of characteristics which make them aesthetic, but which are continuous with the whole range of human activity. As evidence of the difficulty in defining the aesthetic experience directly and concisely, consider the following examples:

Art arouses in certain subjects and at certain moments, intense or profound feelings, ecstasy or rapture where the object of contemplation seems to disappear and the work is forgotten and yet present. Ecstasy remains directed towards itself and gravitates around itself.¹

The aesthetic moment is that flitting instant so brief as to be almost tireless, when the spectator is at one with the work of art he is looking at or with actuality of any kind that the spectator himself sees in terms of art as form and color. He ceases to be his ordinary self and the picture or building,

statue or landscape or aesthetic actuality is no longer outside himself. The two become one entity; time and place are abolished and the spectator is possessed by one awareness. When he recovers consciousness it is as if he had been initiated into illuminating, exalting formative mysteries. In short, the aesthetic moment is a moment of mystic vision. ²

I propose to say that a person is having an aesthetic experience during a particular stretch of time if and only if the greater part of his mental activity during that time is united and made pleasurable by being tied to the form and qualities of a sensuously presented or imaginatively intended object on which his primary attention is concentrated. ³

And finally:

Aesthetic experience is another type of orgasm which, for convenience, I will call the body orgasm. I believe that the sexual orgasm is a body orgasm, but that all body orgasms are not sexual in that they do not have a pelvic focus. ⁴

The need to investigate the aesthetic experience emerged out of the realization that it was impossible to determine criterion for beauty; that there was no such thing as "absolute beauty", characteristics such as smallness, smoothness, brightness or regularity, symmetry, proportion and harmony, or principles such as the golden section or "unity in variety" were attempts to set standards for beauty. But if the artist or the man in the street constructed works of art based on these principles there is no guarantee that they would be beautiful. Since the questions, what is beauty? what causes beauty? how do we recognize something beautiful? remain insoluble, the only remaining line of attack is its effect. The questions asked are not about beauty in itself but about beauty in relation to the mind of the spectator, listener or recipient. This paper attempts to analyse and define the aesthetic experience. But first it is necessary to indicate a problem which exists between two opposing ideas: that which considers aesthetic experience as "the aesthetic experience", that is, one specific type of experience, and that which says there is no such thing, that the term implies different sorts of experience which cannot be considered separately from general experience. Some writers claim that we cannot define aesthetic experience as one sort of experience. Munroe claims that there may be as many types of aesthetic experiences as there are viewers and art objects. ⁵

Berleant feels that the aesthetic experience is not set off from other modes of experience by some unique attribute. "Instead

of being sharply demarcated by possessing some special, unique feature, it is continuous with the whole range of human activity." 6 On the other hand, Dewey and those writers whose definitions appear previously, Berenson, Beardsley and Flannery, describe the aesthetic experience as a specific experience with its own characteristics.

Respecting this fundamental difference in definition a further examination of this phenomenon does not necessitate commitment to either point of view. Further observations are not tied directly to either of these precepts. Proceeding with the point of view that the aesthetic experience is a distinct event with its own characteristic qualities, may help to provide clarity to the discussion, and what is determined through this more restricted approach may also be applied to a more general interpretation of experience that is aesthetic. Two points of view are not necessarily contradictory if they are viewed as a question of extent i.e. in the mode of experience considered aesthetic can be found those characteristics of "the" aesthetic experience to varying degrees.

All definitions of the aesthetic experience reveal some common elements which can be summarized as follows: the aesthetic experience is an immediate unified experience of a viewer, spectator or recipient interacting with an object or event in an intense and profound way. This statement is not intended to be an adequate or complete definition, but only a starting point from which to work towards one. The problem of defining the aesthetic experience is overwhelmingly complex because of the tremendous variation in aesthetic experience. As each person responds to each object/event, he will react differently from other individuals, and even his own experience may vary from time to time. The capacity for aesthetic experience is irregularly distributed and so variable that it follows no known rules. It is affected by racial, social, educational, religious and countless other influences. These influences, both on the formation and development of art forms and on the experience of art form an integral part in the study of modern aesthetics.

However, the difficulty of the task is alleviated when we consider the vast scope of those elements which are common in the area of the experience of art. The fact that man has always sought creative expression and enjoyed aesthetic experience no matter how harsh his environment or how isolated his culture is evidence enough. Assuming that the men of Altamira or Greece experience before art something similar to what we experience, the search for underlying common elements in the aesthetic experience becomes meaningful and relevant.

The Aesthetic Experience is Unified and Immediate

It would be interesting to know who first used the term aesthetic experience with the intent to mark out a kind of experience which is characteristically afforded by works of art.

Whatever its origin, this concept undoubtedly received its fullest development and its richest application in the aesthetic theory of John Dewey. It is largely due to his work that we owe the extensive adoption of the term by contemporary aestheticians.

John Dewey in Art as Experience ⁷ characterizes the aesthetic experience as an immediate unified event. Man is in constant interaction with his environment and life is enriched through the disparity and resistance caused by the conflicts which occur as a result of that interaction. There are rhythmic beats of want and fulfillment, pulses of doing and being and inner harmony is attained when man comes to terms with his environment. Experience occurs continuously as the interaction of the live creature and the environment is involved in the process of living. Things are experienced, but not in such a way that they are composed into an experience. An experience is a whole and has its own underlying quality and self-sufficiency. In an experience, each successive part flows freely "without seam and without unfulfilled blanks"⁸ into what ensues. An experience has a unity that gives it its name -- that meal, that storm, that accident. The unity is provided by a single quality that pervades the entire experience -- it is neither emotional, practical or intellectual, for each of these are simply phases of a developing, underlying quality. "Any practical activity will, provided it is integrated and moves by its own urge to fulfillment, have aesthetic quality." ⁹

An example given by Dewey is that of a stone rolling down a hill. "The stone starts from somewhere and moves as consistently as conditions permit towards a place and state where it will be at rest, toward an end. The final coming to rest is related to all that went before as the culmination of a continuous movement. If these conditions are fulfilled, the stone would have had an experience and one with aesthetic quality." ¹⁰

Dewey states that the creation of every work of art follows the plan and pattern of a complete experience -- rendering it more intensely and concentratedly felt. Perception of the work of art is not mere recognition, but a series of responsive acts which accumulates towards objective fulfillment. There is an act of reconstructive doing which involves the cooperation of motor elements, as well as all previous experience and ideas which may serve to complete the new picture that is forming. The perceiver creates his own experience and his creation must include reactions comparable to those the creator underwent. Without the act of recreation -- ordering of the elements -- by the viewer, the object is not perceived as a work of art.

In every integral experience there is form because there is dynamic integration. There is inception, development, and fulfillment.

Dewey makes no distinction between the aesthetic experience in daily life and that of an art object. To recover the continuity of aesthetic experience with the normal processes, he suggests

going back to the experience of common run-of-the-mill things, watching a fire burning, machines excavating holes in the earth, the movements of a baseball player, in order to discover the aesthetic qualities such experience possesses. We can discover how the work of art develops and accentuates what is characteristically, valuable in things of everyday enjoyment. The art product will then be seen to issue from the latter.

From Art as Experience we derive the idea that the aesthetic experience is a unity; an experience organized from inception through development towards fulfillment. We also derive the quality of immediacy, the experience involves the percipient through interaction with, and participation in, the event. Where Dewey's theory is weak, however, is in that it is too restricted. The aesthetic exists not merely where there is unity in experience, but where there is a certain kind of act, or intuition, a seizure of the individual quality of tonality of the immediate object and all it encompasses. Gotshalk states that the feeling of the total entity must be unanalytical and unintellectual, an encompassing grasp of the totality in its immediacy.¹¹ Berleant believes the aesthetic experience must be intuitive, "the immediacy of aesthetic experience not only denies that anything intrudes into the directness of our encounter with art, it also affirms the forceful presence of our experience. In its positive sense, this is the intuitive quality of art."¹²

Kuspid states that Dewey's theory leads one to reduce all works of art to improvisations, i.e. tentative states of integral fulfillment. He feels "the infinite for which the artist strives has decayed into the finite, the dim apprehension of absolute art has decayed into daily monumental moments."¹³ Dewey dismantles the distinction between the haughty yearning for art and the pedestrian plodding in experience and in the course of resuscitating experience, abandons the abstract ambition for the finess of art, the idea of art for arts sake, not for men's sake."¹⁴

In spite of the many criticisms made of Dewey's theory, his contribution to the understanding of the aesthetic experience as a specific, unified event in which the viewer interacts with the object/event, is significant. The question of intuition is not precluded by what Dewey says, the intuitive aspects of aesthetic response can co-exist with the quality of immediacy, as Berleant points out.

The Aesthetic Experience is Intense and Profound

All definitions of aesthetic experience imply some kind of response to objects/events which are of an emotional nature. If we return to the four definitions in the introduction of this paper we find words such as "intense", "violent", "profound", "ecstasy", "rapture", or "exalting". Beardsley describes the aesthetic experience as having "some degree of intensity."

But before describing the aesthetic experience as emotional, the use of the word "emotion" must be clarified. It would be difficult to dispute the fact that an emotional component can be discerned in the experience of art. Almost every writer dealing with the aesthetic experience inevitably uses terms which denote emotion, "the raptures of a symphony, the bitterness of tragedy, the delights of a poem." It is interesting to note that in all Indo-European languages the words commonly used to refer to a person's emotions are often used to characterize works of art: sad, mournful music, an angry play. However, it is not doing an aesthetic experience justice to speak of the emotional component by using terms like "joyful", "exhilarating", "depressing", and "exciting". Rather, the term emotion when used in reference to the aesthetic experience must be used in reference to a particular "aesthetic emotion", which is aroused by the significant formal relations of the work. It must encompass more than the explanations encompassed in the expressionist theories. The term emotion must be broad enough to include other aspects of experience such as interest, recognition of motifs, forms or ideas, acute perceptual awareness, intellectual insight, perception of relations and the like. For this reason the terms "intense and profound", rather than "emotional" are used to describe the effect of the art object/event on the viewer in the aesthetic experience.

The aesthetic emotion can be distinguished from other types of emotion which are not "artistic" or aesthetic. Emotions can be represented in a work of art, a play about death can depict sorrow, but it is not sorrow that we feel when we talk about the "intense and profound" reaction in an aesthetic experience which may be evoked by the play.

The formalists do not agree that there is a specific aesthetic emotion, but Pepper claims that there is a distinction between what may be called an artistic or unartistic emotion. The artistic emotion rises out of the direct fusion of the details of a work of art (line, color, design). An unartistic emotion is possibly set off by a work of art based on elements or factions not integral to the work. 15

Dewey describes the aesthetic emotion as follows: "Experience and therefore artistic experience is emotional and emotion not as simple and compact as the words joy, hope, fear, anger, but whose duration, whose growth, whose joy and career is inherent to its nature." 16

Collingwood believes that art is the expression of emotion and that the viewer or listener is enabled, through the work to express his emotions. The artistic experience is collaborative. Aesthetic creation is not a work formed in any complete fashion in the mind of the person we call the artist -- the aesthetic experience is a collaborative activity belonging to a community; the artist who expresses the emotion, the artists who influence

him, the audience who not only receives the work of art but recreates the experience and relives the emotion of the artist. The viewer is the artist as well as the painter. The artist is not singular in having the emotion or in his power to express it, he is singular in his ability to take the initiative in explaining what all feel and can express. It is this collaboration aspect of experience which Dewey suggests works through interaction and may result in the "intense and profound" experience.

Assimilating what all these writers have said about the aesthetic emotion as applied to the aesthetic experience, and applying the term "emotion" in its broadest sense, we must conclude that the aesthetic experience has an emotional element. It is labelled here "intense and profound" in order to distinguish it from more general uses of the term emotion. The emotional element goes beyond the "expressionist theory" of Collingwood to include aspects of the formalist, communication and symbolist theories.

Perception, Motor Response and Sensation

Because the interaction between the object/event and the perceiver occurs through perception, motor response and sensation, it is necessary to examine these in terms of their role and significance in the aesthetic experience. It would be impossible to consider to any extent the complex field of perception and its effect on the aesthetic experience in this paper. I shall simply state that the kind of perceptual experience that takes place in the complex relationship between the perceiver and the object/event has a powerful effect of aesthetic experience. Both behaviourist and Gestalt psychology have contributed to our understanding of aesthetic perception, but the dangers of empirical study in this area are also being examined. Dickie in "Is Psychology Relevant to Aesthetics" examines this problem. 17

Empathy

The theory of empathy attempts to explain the aesthetic experience through the notion that the activities of the perceiver tend to merge with the qualities of the object. Empathy theorists such as Theodor Lipps and Vernon Lee have observed how muscular movements are an integral part of aesthetic experience in such a way that there is an emulative physical participation in the aesthetic response. The perception of an object involves a motor response in which the object observed whether through the eye or ear or another of the senses arouses the memory of former movements which are revived and form a nervous pattern. This nervous pattern is an additional stimulation to produce movement. Through this response we perceive space, weight, form, smoothness and many of our experiences. For example, we do not actually have to lift a rock to know if it is heavy or not. Past experience enables us to recreate the experience of lifting as we look at the rock and are aware that it will be heavy. 18

In perceiving an aesthetic object our body reacts in a similar way. Vernon Lee gives the following example: in perceiving the outstretched arm of a statue, we may feel the tension, the weight of the arm, the angle at which it is raised, and the bend of the elbow and wrist. 19

Lipps termed this phenomenon "Einfuhlung" or "feeling into" but believed it was not the actual sensation of muscular effort but that it was a purely mental process without any sensational base. K. Groo's "inner mimicry" 20 indicates that actual movements can be detected in laboratory experiments in perception. The sensations of movements or tendencies to movements are projected into lines and shapes. They are not felt as movements of our body, but fuse with the object as visual, auditory or other forms of perception giving character and meaning to the object. They are also the cause of accompanying enjoyment. But the importance of movements must not be overemphasized in discussing empathy. Just how the response occurs or just what parts of the body are affected in empathy depends on conditions and the total state of the observers organism at the time.

It can be concluded that the aesthetic experience will not occur if the spectator, viewer or hearer does not empathize with the art object/event. This empathetic response is based on perception which need not be visual, but may be auditory or multi-sensory, and involves a motor response which varies with the observer and the situation.

Psychical Distance

Empathy may be lost if the art object/event is not properly "distanced", i.e. distance is lost if an object is overdistanced or underdistanced for the viewer. The concept of psychical distance as conceived by Bullough is a particular kind of psychological event which must occur as a precondition to having an aesthetic experience. It is achieved by separating the object and its appeal from one's own self--putting it out of gear with practical needs and ends.

Normally we view life with a strongly practical approach. We are not ordinarily aware of those things which do not affect us immediately and practically. In art we are presented things from an opposite point of view and they come upon us as revelations. In a play we may be presented with characters in a natural situation, but we are kept from relating to them in a practical way by the knowledge that they are fictitious characters. Sometimes the fact that they appear on a raised stage creates the required distance, or the playwright, as in the case of Brecht, has the characters address and instruct the audience. Underdistanced work is crudely naturalistic and may be repulsive in its realism. The art object must be sufficiently removed to be contemplated; however, if it is too far removed we may find the characters unbelievable, creating the impression of improbability, artificiality, emptiness or absurdity.

The concept of distance in the sense of its providing a balance

between our involvement with and detachment from the object/event is relevant to the aesthetic experience in that it allows us to empathize with the object/event to permit that interaction which is non-cognitive and non-practical, the aesthetic experience.

Sensation and Pleasure

We perceive the work of art through the senses and it is its very sensuous concreteness and immediacy that makes the aesthetic the most naturalistic of all experiences. A danger is created when sensuous experience is not distinguished from pleasure. Despite a tradition of hostility toward the sensuous force of the arts, it has never been possible to suppress this phase of experience. Early studies by Bullough attempted to distinguish between the pleasurable sensuous and the aesthetic experience. He based his studies on the reaction of subjects to color.²¹ Most subjects, when asked why they like a color, respond that they like it because it strikes them as warm or cold, stimulating or soothing, heavy or light. The remainder assumes a different attitude; color does not appeal to them as effects (largely physical) on themselves, but their appreciation attributes to colors a kind of personality; colors are energetic, lively, pensive or melancholic. These characteristics are organic effects transformed into or interpreted as attributes of the color instead of effects on one's own self. They form aesthetic appreciation of the color as opposed to merely agreeable sensuous experiences like those of the former kind.

More recently, this distinction between the merely sensuous experience and the "aesthetic experience" has been diminished. Berleant feels the sensuous aspects of experience have been discredited because of moral and metaphysical inhibitions and that in accepting the sensual and openly erotic, we humanize the entire range of our perceptual experience.²²

Duke Madenfort feels the distinction between the sensuous and aesthetic experience is a false one created by our preoccupation with objectifying experience. Both the sensuous and the aesthetic experiences are neither subjective nor objective. "Since the sensuous qualities are given immediately as the oneness of our body and the world, they are simultaneously qualities of the world and of our living body. Thus, in the aesthetic experience we embody the world and the world embodies us."²³ Madenfort gives good evidence that we cannot separate the sensuous from the aesthetic experience in his article "Education for the Immediately Sensuous as a Unified Whole."²⁴

The Aesthetic Field

So far this paper has attempted to determine characteristics which all aesthetic experiences have in common in order to clarify and understand this specific type of experience. We have

come to certain conclusions about the aesthetic experience. At this point it is necessary to account for the wide variety in aesthetic experiences. These differences may occur within the same individual in responding to different objects/events, between individuals in responding to the same object/event, and between aesthetic experiences occurring in different times and places. Although it would be impossible to explain exactly why one perceiver has an aesthetic experience while another does not, it is possible to explain why this overwhelming variety exists through the concept of the aesthetic field.

The aesthetic experience occurs within an aesthetic field. This field varies with each aesthetic transaction as the elements change. The individual percipient in the aesthetic field has his own aesthetic field determined by the various factors that affect it. He refers to this field in making judgments. It is relatively permanent; it may change from day to day, but it is still relatively unchangeable and stable. Each aesthetic experience affects the individual's aesthetic field by affecting the cumulative experience of the percipient. The aesthetic field of the individual is constantly evolving and an application of this theory can explain differences which occur in judgment from race to race, from individual to individual, or in the same individual from year to year. At the same time it permits a wide field of aesthetic impression a field of individual judgment of the moment, a relatively static field of aesthetic individual judgment (taste) a more fixed objective field, and that of a higher cultivated man as we conceive him (the critic). 25

The aesthetic field in which the aesthetic transaction occurs as distinguished from the individual's aesthetic field, is defined by Berleant in The Aesthetic Field. It is the realm in which all aesthetic experience takes place. The major components are the object, the perceiver, the artist and the performer. The interaction between these components creates the aesthetic transaction which may or may not be an aesthetic experience. The art object or event is the center of attention in the aesthetic field which works with the percipient in a reciprocal, functional relationship. The object/event acts as the main stimulus of the aesthetic experience. The quality that determines whether or not it is art is not an intrinsic property of that object/event, but its ability to function aesthetically. This takes us back to what was stated in the beginning of the paper in reference to Absolute Beauty; we must determine the objects of art by the experience of art, not the experience by the objects.

The perceiver's role in the aesthetic transaction is not independent or isolated but that of the artistic participant in interaction with the aesthetic object. This reinforces the similar view expressed by Dewey and Collingwood that the perceiver recreates the artist's creative experience. The perceiver is subject to the whole range of factors which may affect response from within the realm of aesthetics as well as from general experience.

The artist is the creator of the object/event, and also of the conditions for aesthetic experience, the essential constituents of the aesthetic field. The artist introduces the art public to qualitative experience that has originality and uniqueness.

The performer is not aesthetically superfluous or an unwelcome complicator of the aesthetic field, but his performance is an integral feature of the experience of art. "The aesthetic field must be regarded as a unity in experience. The varying functions of object, perceiver, artist and performer are indissolubly connected and independent, although the particular distribution of the functions will vary with the artist, the object and the perceiver." 26

Why do some aesthetic transactions result in aesthetic experiences after the perceivers while others do not? What causes the interaction between the percipient and the object/event to result in an aesthetic experience at one time and not at another?

Berleant attributes these variations to certain factors which affect the aesthetic field. He lists them as biological, psychological, material and technological, historical, social and cultural. 27 No doubt there are more. These factors act on all four components--the artist, the object, the perceiver and the performer, and result in the tremendous variety of situations and create variations in the aesthetic experience from person to person and from time to time as conditions change. The list of factors will expand and change as the range and variety of aesthetic experience grows, but their effects are the determinant factors in the aesthetic experience.

Knowledge

It is generally agreed that the aesthetic experience is non-cognitive. If experience is given a cognitive turn we move beyond the indiscriminate fullness of immediate experience to the selection of data that serves as evidence for sound and rational judgment. Consequently cognition leaves behind the living directness of the sensory perception by using it as a means to conceptual conclusions and effectual applications. "To force aesthetic experience into a cognitive mold results in mistreating a kind of direct qualitative experience that is characteristically nondiscursive and hence nonrational." 28

However, knowledge of different sorts has relevance to the several phases of aesthetic experience. Technical knowledge and skill plays a significant part in the achievement of the artist and the educated listener of music hears more by being able to hear, not only sounds but their treatments, pattern, distribution and relationships as well. You may aesthetically appreciate a work without knowing anything about its technical aspects, or your appreciation of it may be enhanced by that knowledge. While cognitive awareness may be a condition for aesthetic experience

on one hand, on the other hand it may occur without knowledge or training. We do not have to know anything about Hamlet as a historical figure to see him as a voice of human feelings. We do not need cognitive facts in museums in order to experience an object aesthetically.

As a final point, it is important to distinguish between the aesthetic experience and aesthetic judgment. We may evaluate all objects/events on the basis of knowledge or experience -- historical, formal or technical information. To recognize a particular painting as good, we do not have to have an aesthetic experience. We may not enjoy opera because we find the sounds unpleasant or the presentation artificial, yet we may learn to distinguish between good and bad opera. Knowing about the art form will not guarantee liking it. Knowledge is relevant to aesthetic judgment, but not to aesthetic experience.

Definition

It is possible to assimilate what has been discussed in this paper into a definition which may be expressed as follows: the aesthetic experience is a specific unified interaction between a percipient and a sensuously presented object or event, determined by the aesthetic field in which it occurs. This qualitative interaction is immediate and intuitive, intense and profound, non-cognitive and non-practical. But this definition can only describe an aesthetic experience; it cannot prescribe. The components or characteristics can be identified and analyzed, but one cannot from this definition reconstitute an aesthetic experience. The purpose of this clarification is not to present a kind of scientific explanation of the aesthetic experience, but to attain a greater understanding of this phenomenon which can be applied to the more general fields of aesthetic theory.

Implications for Art Education

Whether the art educator feels that the development of expressive creation, reflective contemplation or aesthetic appraisal should pervade in the field of art education, the study of the aesthetic experience and its application is relevant to his work. In order to be effectual as an art educator, to encourage the development of an aesthetic dimension in the life of the students, the art teacher must understand art production, art appreciation and especially the aesthetic experience. Although the child's initial contact with art should be through a practically-based programme, it is through the study of the aesthetic experience that the teacher can enable his students to understand the creative process, to grow in artistically creative ability, and to foster a capacity to enjoy or otherwise become immediately involved in increasingly complex and sophisticated kinds of perceptual response, especially those elicited by works of art.

Vincent Lanier in "A Plague on All Your Houses" states that

art can help the young explore both the nature and range of their own visual aesthetic experiences, but that this must not be done through the model of the aesthete who tries to clarify the process of aesthetic experience. This clarification is necessary to develop the aesthetic dimension of life; "without it he is limited primarily to easily accessible visual arts -- easy of access in breadth and depth as well -- the visual top, as it were, of the iceberg." 28

If we think that children of school age are too young to investigate the aesthetic experience, we are underestimating their capabilities. Children do not carry the adult freight of past art experience and art education. Their viewing is rather a headlong encounter with reality, a reality that the adult is somewhat uncomfortable with, particularly if he does not empathize with the particular art form. Children and youth do seem to make aesthetic judgments, about clothing, popular music, automobiles and a variety of other things. Yet, these judgments are based not so much on aesthetic or artistic grounds as they are on pressures to conform to the preferences of their peers. Aesthetic standards have been confused and perhaps even debased by extrinsic considerations.

If learners are making choices among artistic objects on non-artistic grounds, simply to present them with allegedly good works of art or allegedly good art activities may not be very educative. What has to be done is to enable them to see why their current choices are poor ones. A good aesthetic education would begin by exploring the nature of all aesthetic response, and in particular response to visual art. It would focus on the question "what happens to us when we react to art?" and move towards criticism and history when the insights are appropriate.

The aesthetic curriculum could begin by explaining the present visual experience of the students and proceed by analyzing collectively the perimeters of response. It could begin in reference to non-art objects and move towards the popular arts before dealing with historical or contemporary art objects. The student must be freed from his cultural perceptions, and his natural ability to search for and discover his own truths and to relate these truths to himself must be developed. To achieve this, the art educator must realize that what is important is not so much the items that issue from artists' studios but rather what happens to people when they confront or produce such things. What happens is referred to as the aesthetic experience.

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Footnotes

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- 6 A. Berleant, The Aesthetic Field, Springfield: Thomas, 1970, p. 58.
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- 27 Ibid. pgs. 74-87.
- 28 V. Lanier, "A Plague on All Your Houses: The Tragedy of Art Education", Journal of the National Association of Education in Art, 27, March 1974, p. 13.